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THE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

PSYCHOLOGY AND SCIENTIFIC METHODS

PRIORITY AND PROGRESS

ANTITHESIS lies at the very base of progress and is woven through all its fiber. The unending conflict which this involves would drive us at times away from this fact, but there is no way of avoiding it. It is the constant presence in the same character of love and hate, desire and abhorrence, indolence and activity. Now one is uppermost, now the other. Psychanalytic investigation discovers that while one is operative in conscious life the other lies in the unconscious, where it may be exerting a power which results in some of the strange contradictions which appear in feeling, thought, and action. Therefore psychanalysis has adopted the significant, dynamic term of "ambivalence" in recognition of this state of affairs.

This ambivalence appears upon a large scale in the great divisions of human thought and feeling in their relations with the realities of existence. Religious belief, conduct, daily occupation, the utmost reaches of logical thought, partake of one antithetical phase or the other, or, more closely examined, prove to consist of a compromise between the two.

These two aspects of life are variously denominated. One is designated the empirical carving into reality in order to discover, to reform, to readapt, to make man's life more abundant, his power more extensive and effectual. Its opposite is described as the conservative, rationalistic acceptation and guarding of that already attained and possessed, the safe and secure enjoyment of the same as of a protecting atmosphere in which character and happiness may flourish and grow. It finds its possibilities already given and contained without excursion into the dangerously new and untried.

These are the progressive and regressive sides of life. Because of the pleasurable sense of security and the lack of effort which the latter implies, they are called, respectively, the adult and the infantile attitude toward existence. They represent the practical attitude of dealing with facts and consequences and the attitude of acceding to the appeal of immediate satisfactions. Neither, however, can stand

alone; each has need of the other; each is the fulfilling complement of the other.

This is equally true in the individual life. The same ambivalence produces a never-solved conflict and a continual alternation between the two poles. Here, too, are applied to it the same terms, and in the individual sphere it is even more sharply defined as the expression of the two fundamental instincts, the nutritive or self-preserved and the reproductive or racial. Upon the wholesome friction between these instincts depends that well-balanced, effectual achievement which is true progress.

Such a perfect adjustment is, however, an ideal toward which there is every degree of attainment with fixation points¹ all along the way, which mark the relative capacity of development of each individual aspirant toward success. The regressive finds its service as an inspirational source of endeavor which grants a diffused, but no less real glow of pleasure about the sterner contact with empirical reality. It must lend to the latter meaning and keep it close to human affairs. Yet the regressive or infantile blinds by its attractions and allures by its false security and peace. We forget the continually recurring call of reality to be up and at our work if we will really find life and expend the inexhaustible creative impulse which drives irresistibly onward. We are part and parcel of "creative evolution." We must sweep onward with it or be swirled helpless to one side, cut short in the perfecting of ourselves and in the impressing of ourselves upon reality in the making.

Work once accomplished affords a peculiar phase of this same temptation. The lure of ease and indolence is then supported by a sense of reward achieved, rest earned, the infantile source and character are successfully concealed behind the importance and magnitude—to ourselves at least—of the definite accomplishment which bears actual witness of something done. We forget that we may not, as Jung has so well expressed it, even stop to take pleasure and satisfaction in the work done lest we be caught dreaming, phantasying there, unmindful of the next step higher which must follow if the creative energy, the libido, is to maintain its essential healthy outflow.

¹ By fixation points are meant those certain definite stages in development which manifest themselves in the earliest years of childhood, at which the individual makes its contacts with environment and derives therefrom a special pleasure gratification combined with sense of power. Normally they are periods of growth which prepare for the adult synthesis of directed useful activity, to which they contribute their energy. Since, however, they are largely pleasure-toned and grant the feeling of ego satisfaction, any or all of them may become emphasized at the expense of later complete development, and therefore fixation upon any of these planes and the conduct growing out of it are termed "infantile." The infantile pleasure must never be completely lost.

Society is full of such partially completed lives who have lost sight of the intrinsic nature of the impulse of life whose only "glory is to go on and to be." They have rather been blinded and stopped by the fascination and confusion of the phantasy enjoyment and the rationalizing power of the human mind to justify its course both of action and inaction. The irresistible nature of the creative impulse, however, can not be brooked with impunity and thus rationalization is further called in to explain the inevitable unrest and dissatisfaction which results, and to relegate them to one or another of the plausible, apparently responsible, sources. Attention may be called, in passing, to the curious irony that has chosen "overwork" as one of the most ready and long-suffering of these scapegoats.

A profounder insight into human character and conduct seeks a new evaluation of determining causes and their manifold elaboration through the intricacies of individual and social life. It serves to clear away the obscurity and confusion which lie about these infantile reactions. It discovers the definite points of fixation and the reason for their attraction for the otherwise outgoing libido, while a consideration of them assists in opening the channels afresh to progress. It reveals in a new way, perhaps, that a sense of priority may have a regressive and therefore unproductive meaning, or it may stand as the servant and very inciter of progress.

Analyses of human nature, the province and the definite work of psychanalysis, have revealed certain universal modes of obtaining power, of securing or retaining mastery over one's surroundings. The word retaining points to the infantile character of the modes. They are methods known mostly merely to the unconscious which, it must be remembered, is the receptacle of the past, the infantile of the race and of the individual. Therefore its ways of mastery are those which served in these early periods and are rather the jealous guarding of the sense of power which primitive thought conceived through its belief in magical efficacy, the omnipotence of the thought, the wish. The infantile period was passed under the same belief fostered by the security and care out of which phantasy arose to prolong the infantile pleasure known as the wish. The adult method is another one, that of gripping firmly with reality and forcing it to yield as much as the impulse toward construction, creation, can wrest from it to build into the next moment of becoming.

The infantile methods, however, secured very intense pleasure at the varying periods of development, and these are not easily given up. True, they must be somewhat modified to fit external demands of adulthood in a cultural civilization, and this transformation makes them unrecognizable for what they are. Their hold, nevertheless, is unconsciously none the less strong, and they lie closer to the surface

than society believes. "Scratch the adult and you will find the child" holds in the affairs of men in the outside world as well as in the nervous clinic.

A sense of priority, then, may be an expression of the infantile lurking just below the surface, or it may be a true sense of combat with the real whereby we know we shall progress and by our success reform that reality to a greater or less extent in behalf of human progress. In fact, priority rightfully partakes of both—inspiration from the pleasure side, stimulus of necessity and of endeavor from the reality side.

What, therefore, does the individual do with this sense of priority and what also is society about concerning it? One of the earliest points of infantile pleasure fixation, and therefore one with a strongly affective tone, is that of the anal erotic, concerned with the process of defecation. The importance of this to the child's early seeking of pleasure and discovering it where, in his limited world, he must needs first find it, in his own body, was first realized by Freud in his penetration into the causes of the psychoneuroses. The fact that this is a pleasure source and fixation point of such overweening importance can be appreciated only through a continued study of the survival or revival of this pleasure in psychoneurotic fears, desires, loathings, especially in compulsive actions and various characteristic reactionary traits which reveal their original source; but moreover in the over-valuation given to scatological customs and ceremonials as they are discovered in primitive races or survive in various pastimes and superstitious customs in peasant Europe. It is universally manifest, moreover, in the ever ready anal and fecal allusion of vulgar wit and its part, apparently indispensable, in the production of photo play, where sooner or later before the reel has gone its round an appeal is made to this infantile characteristic of the audience, to be met by a hearty response.

The symptoms of this striving after power in the outer "normal" world are not unlike those of the compulsive neurotic, the phobic, obsessive or psychasthenic of earlier diagnostic schemes. Like the infant, both would hoard that which they possess, that which they have acquired, each in his own way and in his own time. Granted that the man of the world has by his own hard effort amassed a fortune, that he has attained in other realms, has his libido been satisfied with this? Has the end been the attainment or the effort of attainment? Now that possession is his, retention may be his chief pleasure, like that of the child whose sense of mastery lies in this holding on to his sole possession, wrapped up with his sense of individuality and the pleasure he can produce and enhance in its egotistic enjoyment. Or is the wealth, the new invention, the efficient plant, the

written book but the symbol of larger opportunity? Does he realize a wider outlet for the libido which has found through such attainment possibility and necessity for greater effort? Society steps in with its institutions and corporations, its patents and copyrights, which may serve only to feed the infantile pleasure source through self-centered retention and hoarding, feeding pleasurable on one's own acquisitions; or they may constitute, on the other hand, conservative guards for the various forms of achievement until these may be utilized as sources of inspiration and surpassed in further endeavor by the original author or by others.

Another plane in the development of the individual life perhaps forms the most universal fixation stage, and, moreover, contains within its nature an element of externality which is confusingly blended with the egoistic source. The youth Narcissus, leaning over the stream, beheld his own body so beautiful and lovable that he remained fixed in admiration, enamored with the loveliness and charm of the object, which he scarcely recognized as belonging to himself, until he pined away with longing. So with a vast majority of workers and thinkers. Freud, in his separation of the origin of myth from its rationalistic interpretation, recognized in this legend the projection of one phase in development and its hold upon human thought and feeling. Therefore he denominated this stage the narcissistic, and provided a convenient term which comprehensively symbolizes as narcissists a great class of mankind, often those who have achieved in the higher realms. The narcissistic pleasure in the works often of real beauty and value prevents, however, a further true progress. The priority of the authors is drawn unto themselves and loses its intrinsic meaning because it fails in leadership on the road to advance.

The philosopher² soars in his thought and attempts to grasp the "infinite," but as a fixed goal, as far as he himself may apprehend it. In his projection of the infantile wish he really finds himself in his conception of God and attains thereby an absolute egoistic security. Therefore he jealously guards his system and fears the truly progressive thinker, who is content to force his way into reality bit by bit through the very real fragments which human experience and the limitless world of nature thrust piecemeal upon him.

It is such a narcissistic attitude which rediscovers itself in its ideals and therefore can not brook their uncovering and demolition necessary to progress, which must move a modern pastor of one of our large city churches. He has asserted, with the approval and hearty sanction, also, of apparently a large part of his audience,

See Von Winterstein, "Psychoanalytische Ammerkungen zur Geschichte der Philosophie," *Imago*, Vol. 2, 1913.

that we have only so much truth as God has been pleased to reveal to us, that science adopts the wrong starting-point at the very beginning, because she *assumes* knowledge. Safely wrapped in his clerical robes, such a teacher of men can hardly fit them for the actual buffettings of experience. His narcissistic adoration of his own secure phantasy and projected infantile wish does not offer leadership into the problems of reality thrust upon individual and society. Reality must move on, and thus the church is left behind with the few whose libido can be satisfied or compromised by phantasy, an "ark of safety," instead of becoming the pilot boat past the rocks and shoals out into the resource of the infinitely extending sea not of fixed, but of "becoming" actuality.

The author, too, who counts his work done when his book is out between its covers and reflects his potency and charm from his shelves, has really reached no goal. He has merely flung out a challenge to thought. Either he or another must at once take up the gauntlet. And what matter if it be another? The copyright rightfully raises no hedge about the Narcissus pool where the author may admire himself in undisturbed serenity. His thought can not be bound and even his words may be taken from him if some mind more alert seizes the suggestive power of the thought. This is then carried at once through a transvaluation of it in the other's experience, it may be, to a new development, a new application to the affairs of human progress, material and psychical. Instead of narcissistic enjoyment there is therefore afforded a keener and greater pleasure to the original author himself in fresh opportunity to enter the stream of progressive thought higher up, where his collaborator has brought it, and thus the stream of becoming grows greater and each new plunge into duration is richer and more fruitful.³

Freud's tracing of human development through the "polymorphous" infantile stages, which normally are contributory to the complete concentration of an effective life, reveals the close merging of one stage into another. In the same manner the opportunities for fixation and for its occurrence at any of these planes are not sharply defined. They can not and need not be clearly separated in this discussion of them. It is enough to point out these certain dangers that lie along the path and which all partake of the same nature. Their consideration is profitable only as it aids in recognizing why and how we become held fast, progress checked and libido driven over into dissatisfaction and revealed even in pathological symptoms which can assume a countenance of plausibility and justification, an infantile beauty which is not recognized as seductive.

Therefore another phase of fixation may be discussed. This mani-

³ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*.

fests itself sometimes in a curious manner and impedes that mutual cooperation toward achievement and advance which corresponds to the completely heterosexual physical and psychical development of the well-rounded life. The homosexual component of every individual becomes over-emphasized at one point or another and is responsible for much social and intellectual failure and ineffectiveness. Certain dreams from the life history of a patient whose conflict was sharply accentuated by a distinct unconscious homosexual complex followed closely upon a period of social aloofness and professional discrediting of a member of her own sex. They suggested at least one of the very persistent sources of jealousy and want of appreciation that exists perhaps more particularly in woman's attitude toward her fellow worker, who should be also only her collaborator and mutual stimulus toward increasingly higher and wider levels of opportunity. Perhaps woman's necessary biological position and the tardiness with which she has entered into the world of active intellectual achievement has allowed thus far greater stress upon such an infantile mode of reaction to the unconscious homosexual impulse.

Here, likewise, a sense of one's own inferiority plays a large part, but this is an important element in each infantile form of reaction. That is something with which each one must reckon. It is in truth a part of the reality, our attitude toward which determines upon which plane we belong, what is our capacity for effectual attack. This sense of inferiority finds compensation through the impregnable safeguard of the anal erotic hoarding impulse, it creates the image of security for narcissistic absorption, it reacts by jealous depreciation; or in contrast to all these it forms the starting-point for a very real and determined campaign through "extroversion" of the libido upon external actuality and possibility, the finding of one's life through the losing of it.

Just as the child first forms and discovers his reactions toward reality through contact with his miniature world, so the elements of that world are those which appear and reappear in these various forms and grades at which he may become fixed or, on the other hand, thoroughly sublimated in his healthful, complete attitude toward life. Thus the parent complex, the greatest thing, because the closest and by necessity the most exclusive relationship of the early most impressionable years, manifests itself through all these stages. It works also more directly. That which the father has been, has believed, has held as the final ideal must remain the ultimate point of attainment. Nothing beyond this is true, fair, respectable in belief; it is unjust in material affairs. It may be the failure of recognition toward the father's work on the part of society in the past which creates a jealousy of future progress. Injustice to the

father, perhaps merely his own ineffectualness retranslated in the wish revaluation of the child, as of the father, too, blinds one to the value of the rival's work and makes it impossible to see any glory and honor in his future achievements. It forgets that progress can never be stationary, that advance must proceed, and that out of possible injustice and withholding of recognition and reward, even out of wrong, priority has again its two ways of emerging. It may adopt the infantile regressive road of regret, defeat, recrimination, or it may seize upon the outward path which takes up the degree of advance, even if achieved through another's efforts, built upon the vantage point earlier lost for a time, and join once more cheerfully in the onward procession. Even though active participation may necessarily be laid aside, the progressive attitude has not time or thought for jealous withdrawal from at least a sympathetic and self-forgetful swinging into tune and thus a very real participation in the onward march of events.

The uncovering of the infantile pitfalls which still retain the adult libido or lie perilously open for its return is in no sense a dragging of higher achievement and endeavor into a useless contact with the past or even with that which we are accustomed to regard as the mire and too earthly soil. Out of this arose human life and its conditions. A clearer understanding of these things and of their hold upon us must be salutary. The clearer understanding can only come through acquaintance with this other side of our nature whose expression on the conscious, external side is so distorted and so puzzling. A recognition of the broader unconscious side of the dissatisfactions, inadequacies, painful and destructive reactions to the exigencies of competition, brings its own therapy with it. It must point the way to a priority which is founded in the progressive attitude, which has its only justification as a factor in progress, an unresting instigator toward it and an efficient tool for its achievement.

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SPIRIT AND MATTER: A REPLY TO DR. DASHIELL

DR. DASHIELL'S article¹ in a recent number of this JOURNAL interests me as an excellent illustration of the practise now prevalent among thinkers of the pragmatist persuasion of treating the traditional problems of philosophy as meaningless puzzles produced by the barren intellectualism of the past. Thus the ontological dualism of spirit and matter is in Dr. Dashiell's opinion a consequence of the natural tendency of man to generalize

¹ John Frederick Dashiell, "Spirit and Matter: A Philosophical Tradition."